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A CHARGE,

TO THE CLERGY OF THE EAST RIDING,

DELIVERED

AT THE ORDINARY VISITATION,

A. D. 1846.

BY

ROBERT ISAAC WILBERFORCE, M.A.

ARCHDEACON OF THE EAST RIDING.

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET ;

ROBERT SUNTER, YORK.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

TO THE CLERGY
OF THE
DEANERIES OF BUCKROSE, DICKERING, AND HOLDERNESS,
THIS CHARGE,
PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
IS RESPECTFULLY
DEDICATED.

A CHARGE.

My Reverend Brethren,

I may congratulate you that no act has passed the Legislature during the last year, by which the laws of the Church are directly affected. This is reason for thankfulness; since, as Parliament has ceased to consist exclusively of Churchmen, its interference with the private arrangements of the Church must needs subject them to be handled by those who can hardly understand, and, not unfrequently, may dislike her constitution. It has been proposed, indeed, to repeal those portions of the Act of the thirteenth of Elizabeth, by which it was made penal either to deny the Supremacy of the Crown, or to introduce Bulls from Rome into England. This, however, is a step by which we can scarcely be said to be more affected than the residue of our fellow-subjects. In the abolition of all persecuting statutes, the Church indeed is especially interested, since it is of primary importance that she should herself feel, and make it felt by others, that her hold is on the affections of the public, that she cannot exist as an Establishment, save by leavening the national mind with her inherent principles, that neither law nor proscription, nor the sympathy of any single class, could compensate in the present day for the neglect of that bounden duty with which she has been entrusted by Almighty God, for the benefit of this age and country.

The Church, then, does not stand in the way of the perfect toleration of all her Majesty's subjects. And yet the State may find it inconvenient to recognize the principles of

those, whose consciences she is unwilling to coerce. This fact was elicited by the inquiries of a Prelate, as remarkable for his eloquence and ability, as for his watchful zeal for the interests of the Church—the Bishop of Exeter. His questions drew forth the following statements from those members of the legal profession who are Peers of Parliament. 1st. That independently of the penalties of the first and thirteenth of Elizabeth, the ancient vigour of the Common Law is sufficient to vindicate the Crown's Supremacy. 2ndly. That these principles of Common Law were in existence during those centuries before the Reformation, when the Church of Rome had not yet separated herself from the Church of England, and therefore when our public principles accorded with the principles of Rome. 3rdly. That to deny the Supremacy of the Crown is at present, and ever has been, an unalterable part of the Romish system.

This seeming inconsistency of statement depends of course on that real incompatibility which always existed between the laws of England and the maxims of Rome.

The Pope's claim to possess Supremacy by divine right, as opposed to that precedence which the Church voluntarily conceded of old to its leading metropolitan, has been advocated by Romanists on grounds which, pushed to their results, would issue in two very distinct principles. The first would represent him as Christ's vicar upon earth, possessing supreme authority over the consciences of men. The second, taking a lower view of Church authority, would yet imply that spiritual jurisdiction over Christendom is the inalienable right of the Bishop of its capital city. Of course the Pope's Supremacy may be advocated on other principles, but this must be the view of things taken by legislators, for such was the aspect of affairs in those mediæval days, when was laid the groundwork of our present institutions. Now the first of these systems supposes modern society a Theocracy; and such was the principle asserted by Hildebrand and defended by Bellarmine. The second is based on the position of the Bishops of Rome under the Christian Emperors—on the influence of Leo, and the edict of Valentinian. But even this latter and more moderate hypothesis supposes the whole of Europe one sovereignty,

asserts the perpetuity of that empire of which Rome was the capital, and therefore denies the national existence of the English people. Hence arose perpetual collisions between the civil and spiritual power, from the time when the new pretensions of the Pope were put forward under Gregory VII., till they were finally denied by the English Convocation and Parliament, A. D. 1534. The independence of England was asserted by the statute of Provisors, in the 25th Edward III., no less than by the statute of Appeals, in the 24th of Henry VIII. You may withdraw, therefore, every penalty which was enacted for the safety of the English Church, but there will still remain a repugnancy, so long as the latter statute continues to assert that "by sundry old authentic histories it is manifestly declared that this realm of England is an Empire."

These, however, are questions for politicians to agitate: they do not affect us, whom the more primitive constitution of our own Church exempts from the difficulties of a divided allegiance: nay, I would not affirm that all modern Romanists must be affected by them. Let us turn to more immediate considerations.

Among the events of the year, we have reason to be thankful for the completion of a most important work—the College for training Schoolmasters at York, which will be opened, by God's blessing, in the ensuing month. The temporary buildings which the Institution has hitherto occupied, have long been overcrowded. Within this Archdeaconry, School-houses have been erected at Nafferton, Flamborough, Skipsea, and Frodingham. This extension of education makes it more important to consider how our people are to be supplied with suitable books. This object has been in a measure provided for, by the Depositories of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, at Beverley, Hull, and other places. Most of us, probably, are in the habit of providing our parishioners with Bibles and Prayer-Books at reduced prices; to judge from my own experience, the number which may be disposed of in a parish of moderate population is very considerable. But, to provide works of a more general character, some considerable capital is needed. Formerly, the above-mentioned Society supplied

such works on credit to our Depositories ; but a rule adopted this year, requires present payment for its stock. The support of the existing Institutions, therefore, and still more, their adequate extension, will require considerable effort. To this your attention should be called ; and your influence must be exerted with your lay neighbours. Though liberality abounds in this country, yet, from the vague and indiscriminate manner in which it follows the guidance of feeling, rather than of principle, Church objects hardly have that precedence which might be anticipated in the support of Churchmen. It is to be regretted that charitable persons do not always discern that attempts to extend the Gospel cannot be successful without being systematic ; and that so long as they continue members of the Church, they are bound by consistency to the Church system.

In mentioning those objects towards which the charity of our people ought in the first place to be directed, it is impossible not to regret the want of a Diocesan Church Building Society. To this circumstance we must possibly attribute it, that no additional Church has been built in the Archdeaconry during the present year, although some of our larger towns are rapidly augmenting, and smaller places might be pointed out where district Churches are greatly needed. It is to those who live in our great towns, where the want is especially felt, that we must look for the proposal to originate such an Institution. You will be glad to hear that the foundation of a new Church at Hull is to be laid during the present week, and the work will not be allowed, surely, to stand still, for want of aid from its wealthy neighbourhood.

This hope is encouraged by the efforts made this year for the restoration of our old Churches—a necessary step towards the erection of new ones. For it were hopeless to provide new buildings, till due use is made of those which exist. Now the first and main object for which our Churches were originally built—the public worship of Almighty God—seems in many cases to have been studiously counteracted. We are taught by common piety, and the Word of God expressly confirms it, that outward obeisance of the body is a natural and fitting preparation for the inward worship of the

soul. On this spiritual warrant are framed the directions of our Church. They carry out the exhortation of David, "O, come, let us worship, and *fall down* and *kneel* before the Lord our Maker." A place of worship, then, is one where such service is naturally suggested. But can the majority of our Churches, as at present fitted up, be thus described? Are their arrangements such as naturally to lead men to fall down and worship? In many cases, is not the posture of kneeling irksome, if not altogether impossible? No doubt men may pray everywhere, as Paul and Silas did in the stocks. But can those be called places of worship where none can kneel down, where, without painful effort, none could kneel to worship? This is surely the great thing which requires to be corrected in our Churches. Whether they be rich or poor, mean or handsome, whether the lofty roof ascend to heaven, and the soaring window admit every colour of the rainbow, or the low ungainly ceiling scarce rises above our heads, yet it is surely possible to render in them the outward signs of devotion to God, and to kindle the affections of the worshippers by the consentient humility of a collective homage. The most important features in the Church Restorations of this year, have not been the external beauty and the elegance of taste, which in several remarkable instances they have implied and encouraged, but that the Churches which have been rebuilt and restored are evidently designed for God's worship, and that men can kneel down to offer in them their collective prayers.

The works which were mentioned last year, as in progress, at the Holy Trinity, Hull, and at All Saints, Rise, have been most auspiciously completed. The Choir of the Holy Trinity requires indeed to be repaired, and till this object is effected, the wonderful beauty of that noble building cannot be duly estimated. Rise Church, within smaller dimensions, is a most elaborate and beautiful work; and somewhat similar may be said respecting the ancient Church which has been rebuilt at Scampston. For these works we are indebted solely to the munificence of the possessors of the soil, Mr. Bethell, and Mr. and Mrs. St. Quentin, save that the beautiful east window at Rise has been presented by the Rector, so that according to the ancient principle, the inhabitants of

each parish have to thank its owners for providing God's service a perpetual place amidst the transitory habitations of men. The other restorations to be mentioned, are owing to the exertions or liberality of the Clergy. The well-proportioned Chancel of All Saints, Lund, has been nearly completed by the Rev. John Blanchard, who has thus afforded an excellent example to the Deanery over which he presides. We may speak also with entire satisfaction of the great improvements effected this year in St. Leonard's Church, Beerford, by Archdeacon Creyke. The erection of a new aisle, with oak seats of excellent construction, the removal of the gallery and unsightly ceiling, the restoration of the choir, the introduction of Powell's quarries, together with two stained windows, make this one of our handsomest Churches. In conclusion, I have to notice two adjoining parishes, East Cottingwith and Sutton-on-Derwent, where a similar work is going on. Through the exertions of the Rev. John Garrett, who has made the best use of the brief period during which he has been curate at Cottingwith, and the liberality of the Rev. George Read, rector of Sutton-on-Derwent, the inhabitants of these villages will be able henceforth to use their Parish Churches as places of worship. Works are also in progress or contemplation, at Nafferton, Ferriby, and other places, of which we may speak, if God spares us, next year. And considering the amount of reparations which has now been mentioned, and adding to it what has been noticed on preceding occasions, does it seem too much to hope that at no distant period every Church in this Riding may assume the internal aspect of an House of Prayer? Allow me, before passing on, to express a fervent hope that those for whose use such places are provided, will remember their suitable employment. I would entreat my lay brethren who are present, to consider what an awful mockery it were to enter God's house, and not be willing even to render him the outward signs of worship. True, the heart's devotion is the thing of moment, and if this is not paid, all is worthless. But the heart's devotion is the harder, the outward obeisance of the body, the easier part of reverence; and if that which is less difficult is denied, how can we hope that what is more arduous is truly rendered?

In noticing the improvements which have taken place in our parish Churches, it is ground of satisfaction that a restoration of the fabric has usually contributed to an increase in the congregation. At first sight this may seem surprising. The external building is of course only subsidiary: the assembly of God's people is that house not made with hands, in which is His real presence; and their place of meeting, whether it be crypt, catacomb, or chamber, has equal promise of those superhuman visitations of His ascended humanity in which individual devotion falls short of the worship of the great congregation. Hence the ancient rule, *ubi tres ibi ecclesia*. Now this fact might have been supposed to furnish sufficient motive for men's assembling themselves together. What can move a man who is unaffected by the certainty of Christ's near presence? What is more awakening than the solemn realities of death and judgment.? But man is a compound being, whom we must be content to take as we find. Enough, if by any means we may save some. Indeed, it has been matter of charge against the system of our Church, that it is too stiff and unaccommodating. As early as the publication of the second book of Homilies, complaint is made of the infrequent attendance at Church, consequent on the proscription of certain attractive accessories to public worship. And the tendency of those days was so plainly towards superstition, that its suppression might be fitly purchased by a temporary unpopularity. But however jealous our reformers of questionable forms, however disposed to throw their weight in an opposite direction, we must not forget that their decision was in favour of an abundance of usages, which subsequent times have abandoned. A whole body of customs has passed away, by which the system of the Church was then rooted in the affections of the people. Even the significancy of those several seasons which recall our Lord's birth, death, resurrection, and ascension, seem in danger ere long of being forgotten. Whether men will be happier or more religious because they no longer consider it unseemly to marry in the holy season of our Lord's sufferings, and because His open sepulchre calls forth no cheerful acclamations that the Lord is risen, we need not now inquire. At all events, such state of things was not encouraged by

those compilers of our public services, who left their recorded conviction of the safety of many practices which the Prayer Book enjoins, but which the carelessness of later times has lost sight of. Of these customs they affirm that "it is not like that they in time to come should be abused as other have been." Their judgment, therefore, is in favour of such charitable consideration of man's nature, as should adapt our worship and our rules to the requirements of our people. We need not fear to make our service too cheerful and interesting. Last year, something was said on one of its most effective portions—the Sermon. Allow me to offer some suggestions to-day, respecting what may seem its minor circumstantialia, remembering that after all, nothing can be unimportant which contributes to promote God's glory, or by which the devotion of our fellow Christians may be promoted. The point to which I would ask your attention, is the use of music in our Churches. We need stray no further than to any conventicle in the land to see its potent influence. For what so much calls people together, what so excites their interest, and quickens their feeling, as the consonant blending of many voices even in the harsh and rugged stream of undisciplined thanksgiving. Let this be compared with what may be heard in many Churches, the more measured tone of two or three, in like manner, unskilled performers, or perhaps the unvarying movements of a barrel organ, and can we wonder that our people relish that which has life, rather than the cold, dead, cheerless monotony of a mere professional devotion. To this must be added that even where music is attended to, it is often a sort of garnishment of the service; the introduction of extraneous psalms and hymns, which throw the Liturgy itself still more into gloom, rather than the bringing out of that deep meaning and matchless beauty which our services themselves possess, and the investing them with whatsoever adventitious interest can be derived from the manner of their performance. Now it may fearlessly be asserted, that there is nothing in the English tongue better adapted to musical expression, nothing which would more surely steal into men's hearts, and gain hold on their sympathy, than those majestic psalms, creeds, and canticles which have in reality been the models of our native speech.

That this truth has been so generally forgotten, is in part owing to the unhappy example often exhibited in places where the music of the Church might especially be cultivated. Musicians do not always remember that in the house of God their art is a means and not an end. Unless it is subservient to the purposes of worship, to the glory of God, and the edification of His people, to what purpose should it intrude into the sanctuary? Not only what is light and frivolous, but what is intricate and complicated is unfit for that common worship, in which all should share. On the other hand, we must guard against a fault as common in country Churches, and not a whit less obnoxious—a slow drawling movement which renders chanting wearisome and attention impossible. The natural manner of singing psalms and canticles, is that the words themselves should be musically expressed, such time being apportioned to each clause in the chant as the length of the expression may require; and the object of the melody being nothing else than to blend and combine as into a single thread the else incoherent voices of the collected worshippers. Here is no fit place for “the melting voice” to be “through mazes running,” and even the “linked sweetness” should not so be “drawn out,” as that the sense should be lost sight of in the sound. Of course what has been said applies not to the use of Anthems in proper places and at proper times. But if the Church Service itself could be musically expressed, of course where the congregation desire and are willing to unite in it, a great practical evil would speedily be corrected, and the music of the Church would probably become not less popular than that of the conventicle.

The taste of individual places and forms is so different, that it is far easier to state a general principle of this kind, than to follow it into the detail of practical suggestions. You will of course feel that nothing could be less desirable, than to force any alteration on an unwilling congregation. Indeed, it has been matter of peculiar thankfulness, that throughout this Archdeaconry we have been entirely free from those rubrical disputes, which have convulsed other neighbourhoods. But men may often be led to improvements, to which they would refuse to be driven. At present, my only object is to

bring before you the principle on which Church Music should be regulated, namely, that the music should be subordinate to the words, not the words to the music. The mere musician will be naturally inclined to divide the chant in reference only to musical notation, without allowing that interval to the words which may be required by their number or significancy. But it is the peculiar advantage of the chant, that it gives room for the unconstrained evolution of every syllable. The best remedy both against a hurried indistinctness, and against the painful drawl, which is mistaken for solemnity, will be the use of single in preference to double chants, and such disposition of the words as may harmonize in time and arrangement with their natural expression. The employment of grinding organs also is to be deprecated, as rather obstructing, than assisting, vocal music. The mechanical combination of wood and metal can be no adequate substitute for that full-voiced praise, which should be uttered by living worshippers. It would often be far better if the funds thus expended were employed in the instruction and sustentation of a village choir. Were our people taught something of music, they would not be so ready, as at present, to value mere noise, and their perceptions would be quickened of what is due to reverence and devotion. It were well if the clergy themselves were competent to instruct them, and it may be noted as indicating the feelings of the time, that the theological course introduced into King's College, London, contemplates instruction in Church Music, as one ingredient in a system of clerical education. Where the clergy are destitute of this accomplishment, they must call in other aid—schoolmasters or organists—but they should remember that to their hands the Church has entrusted the arrangement of whatever service is offered up in Church, and on them depends the great principle of making music subservient to devotion. Let them aim at this as an end without which they will not be satisfied. Let no clergyman sit down contented because he has told his people that they should praise God, if they do not do it. Is not the Christian Church God's earthly temple? Is it not to be built up in every village of our land? Is it not our part to arise and build it? Is it enough to tell men what they should do,

without seeing that it is effected? Can we rest satisfied to live as among dead men, who have no heart for the glorious work of God's public service? Depend on it, there is fire in our people's hearts if we knew how to kindle it. They cannot always be indifferent to the majesty of that service which it pleased God of old time so signally to bless. What is needed to arouse them save the same spectacle which was exhibited in the temple, when the 136th Psalm was first chanted, while "the Levites which were singers, all of them, were as one to make one sound, to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord."

We may add, that the effect of such worship on those who render it, would not terminate in a mere appeal to their feelings. The doctrinal consequences which it would involve would be singularly important. Nothing would more set the Church before men's thoughts as a substantive existence, than to find that all her members had in this manner a common duty, and that the offering up of her public prayer was a real outward charge, in which it was their united privilege to participate. That which lives will find voice and utterance. If the Church be more than a name, her life will be attested by the consentient actions of her children. Probably it was from an instinctive dissatisfaction at this practical recognition of the Church's existence, that the founders of the Puritan separation during their exile at Frankfort, endeavoured to put down the ancient antiphonal manner of Church service, by silencing the responses of the congregation. They could hardly have adopted a course so inconsistent with their own principles, as to interfere with the freedom of worship, if they had not discerned that a deep principle was involved in this common action of the Christian congregation. We may thank God that their principles never prevailed in this country, and that we and all members of the English Church are bound to that ancient mode of service, which sets forth the Church of Christ as a real body, rendering to God the true sacrifice of its collective worship, and thereby united into that one corporate being, through which its individual members participate in the gifts of grace.

As an illustration of the effect of this principle, we may instance its relation to a very interesting function of the

Church's life—its Missionary character. The Church we know is the great Missionary Society, founded for this purpose by our Lord himself, and the present limits of Christendom show that its work, however imperfectly performed, has not been altogether neglected. Our voluntary associations in furtherance of this great design are but attempts, more or less successful, to supply the deficiencies occasioned by the unfortunate lack of freedom and pliability in the system of our Church. Such efforts are eminently interesting to our people, they bring out the Church's real life, and true position, and most earnest men will agree that improvement at home will bear proportion to the increase of religion in our Colonies. It is great reason of satisfaction, therefore, to observe how readily the clergy of this district have in general responded to the godly admonition of our revered Diocesan, that we should make an increased effort in support of a Church Mission to the Colonies. But it is not to the nature or importance of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, or any other institution, that I now call your attention, but to the large share which united worship is ever found to bear in Missionary successes. In truth, it supplies the real corrective to one deep-seated source of heathen misery. For not the least among the evils of heathenism, is the want of some public life, and some feeling of the brotherhood of mankind, which may re-unite the divided heirs of our common mortality, and give back one language and one speech to those who have been separated by sin. For heathenism is the chaos of the moral world, wherein the principles of man's life are struggling without form and void till the spirit of God move upon them. Hence the momentous influence of civil unity in the ancient world, as the sole bodying forth of a public principle and united life among the sons of men. But the first four sovereignties, which under their several modifications possessed the world, were but the preparation for that fifth Empire, which supplies the true principle of unity to the nations—the Church of Christ is the real bond of national life, the true principle of concord among men, the redresser of the fall, the assertion of a federal being and family alliance, whereby all members of Christ are made members of one another. And the acts of this family

are those common deeds of collective worship whereby God's glory is set forth and man's welfare subserved, wherein all Christians speak as one man, as having "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Hence the significancy of a public liturgy, wherein the wants of all are comprehended, and which gives to each his place in the family of God. And this privilege is felt most keenly by the heathen. The very building up among them of an united society, wherein all speak the same thing, which displays the concordant action of the great human family towards its common Maker and Redeemer, is a witness of the restoration of that golden age of peace, which has lingered amongst the traditions of every people. This blessing, which Lawgivers and Philosophers had desired in vain, is given back only in the blessed unity of the Church of God. Its natural expression is that concordant worship which gives utterance to the wants of all hearts, yet combines their individual aspirations in the inspiring fervour of a common thanksgiving. Add to this that the worship thus presented is an effectual sacrifice, assuring to the single worshipper his peculiar want, and the immediate presence of the Being he serves; and setting forth the main function of the Church, to perpetuate God's public service to the end of time—and we have reason enough for that earnest interest with which the new converts of the Eastern world take part, as we are assured, in the noble sentiments of our ancient Liturgy.

Would to God that we could excite our brethren at home to claim this birthright, as members of the Christian family, with the same fervency. Such a habit would re-act upon their belief, as well as upon their worship; they would understand better the purposes for which they met, and the nature of that society which held them together. And herein they would find a safeguard against the prevailing unbelief of the present day. For the unbelief of our day, without casting off the name, is as hostile as ever to the reality of religion. Religion depends on the spiritual perception of those unseen realities, by which we are perpetually surrounded. Almighty God,—Jesus Christ our Lord,—the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son—together with the actings of this ever-blessed Trinity,—God

manifest in the flesh,—man united to GOD—his participation, through holy mysteries, in the divine nature,—Christ's presence really in both Sacraments—the implanting by baptism of a new nature, which may war with the old Adam of carnal flesh—the perpetual replenishment of the renewed man through the Lord's Supper—all these are external facts and objects of the Gospel, which it is the tendency of the present age to explain away and forget. The sceptical observer looks only at man's acts, at what he sees and feels and judges, because GOD's acts are above sight and beyond experience. Instead of a divine system, in which everything is supernatural, religion is lowered down to a sort of philosophy, which knows how to adapt itself more sagaciously than in former times to the emergencies of life. Now, against this danger it is the very office of the Church to protest. She witnesses for those divine realities, which only the eye of faith discerns. She testifies that the manna, of which the faithful daily partake, is indeed angels' food. She builds on the external verities of the ancient faith, not on the shifting quicksand of individual opinion. We may see the result of the opposite system in Germany, where the Holy Scriptures were formerly as much esteemed as among ourselves, but which is now vexed by one vapid scheme of philosophy after another, while the faith once delivered to the Saints has been laughed to scorn and forgotten. The well-intended desire to vindicate Scripture from human tradition, has ended there in each man's substituting the idol of his own fancy for the truth of GOD.

Against such an error we cannot guard too jealously. It is the natural danger of a cultivated age. The main safeguard which God has provided, is in that witness which is borne by the Church to the objective and external realities of religion. The tendency of men is to measure faith by feeling, and to esteem nothing important, which does not approve itself at the moment to their private wills. But the Church witnesses to truths independent of themselves. Her primæval existence takes no colour from their judgments. Those creeds which of old time embodied the mind of the Spirit, are preserved to the letter in her formularies. The

naked simplicity of their ancient dicta has survived centuries of strife. She allows no novel interpretation of the words of Scripture, because its original purport is unaffected by lapse of years. When we speak of the rule of Holy Writ, we speak of one rule, not of many, of writings containing an intelligible meaning, bound to one another by fixed relations, and terminating in distinct and definite results. For the rule of Scripture is not what any one chooses to find there, but what the Holy Ghost intended to convey. Now, this single unmixed system of truth is conveyed to us in those ancient formularies, which embody the essentials of truth, inculcated by the Apostles. Of the laity at large, therefore, our Church does not require assent to anything except those primary truths, which were received as essential by the first followers of the Apostles. Their faith is not matter of controversy, dependant on the uncertain result of argument; it is matter-of-fact, determined by the positive testimony of history. Christianity is an historical system, based on events, which it pleased God to determine, not one of those philosophical theories, in which the goodness of the cause is often of less weight than the ability of the disputant. And when the Convocation of 1571 required the Clergy to subscribe to those Articles, which guide their teaching, it accompanied them with a general statement of its purpose, in which this principle is distinctly expressed. Every formulary may itself need explanation; Creeds and Articles may be misinterpreted, as well as Scripture. To what, then, does our Church refer the Clergy, as determining that true sense of Holy Writ, which alone has the authority of God. How can those who teach others be themselves directed? To say that it is enough for them to be sincere, that any interpretation of Scripture is equally admissible, that Socinus is as much justified in his new explanation, as the great Athanasius in his old one—this is in reality to deny that there is any such thing as truth, or any real meaning in the Word of God. Yet, to deny that good as well as wise men have taken different views of the meaning of Scripture, would be to want knowledge or to want charity. It may be said that God's Spirit will guide those who pray sincerely; but who

shall arbitrate, when contrariant opinions are adopted by those who equally pray for guidance; and were it not as easy to find a test for the truth of men's opinions as for the sincerity of their prayers? We plainly need, therefore, some fixed principle by which the meaning of Scripture may be decided. It must be something external to ourselves, that it may not fluctuate according to our state of feeling or degree of information, but be fixed, durable, and apparent. And such a rule our Church declares us to possess, in that one specific system of faith which existed from the earliest age of Christianity; a system embodied in the acts and teaching of the ancient worthies, and which has its formal expression in the Creeds. For in the Creeds we have certain positive statements, possessing a definite meaning and scientific accuracy, which, when taken in that sense in which they were framed, will open to our thoughts the one channel of truth, whereby the Spirit of God designed to guide them. This rule, therefore, the Church requires all teachers to adopt, exacting from them that they shall teach nothing but what Scripture declares; and inasmuch as the meaning of Scripture is disputed, that they shall maintain that sense which was uniformly deduced from it in the earliest ages. "*Videbunt ne quid unquam doceant pro concione, quod a populo religiose teneri et credi velint, nisi quod consentaneum sit doctrinæ veteris aut novi testamenti, quodque ex illa ipse doctrina catholici patres et veteres Episcopi collegerint.*"

In this principle there is something solid, certain, and unalterable. Its basis is the unvariable fixedness of the past. However difficult at times to apply, it seems impossible to dispute it. Were the meaning of Scripture to vary, according to the interpretation put upon it by any living authority, it would be liable to continual alterations. It might develop itself into Romanism on one side, or into Atheism on the other. This has been exemplified in those continental communities, which professed to abide by the writings of the great men after whom they were severally denominated. On what principle, it was asked, can Luther and Calvin be exempted from the control of that private caprice which originally enthroned them? And when the symbolical writings

of Luther ceased to be supposed infallible by his countrymen, as for nearly two hundred years had been the case—a change which took place towards the earlier part of the last century—and when, about the same period, the townsmen and disciples of Calvin shook off their reverence for a human interpreter—the two parties, having no other principle to fall back upon, declined gradually into those Pantheistic and Socinian Heresies, by which they are still enthralled. We may thank God, then, that the English Church has adopted a system, which from its very nature can know no alteration, a system not dependent on caprice, or the variations of inward feeling, but substantive, external, objective. We have here the fulfilment of the Apostle's declaration, that the Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth." And since this system is not built upon an arbitrary preference for any popular individuals, but on the natural statement of those truths, which were set forth by God's Spirit, it is only consolidated by lapse of time. In the application, indeed, of the practical sayings of Scripture there is room for infinite diversity, as men are guided by events, or by the inward exigencies of their own minds; and even its doctrines admit of extension, as the course of life unfolds the mighty secrets of the divine wisdom, but unless there be a basis of external reality, unless the truths set forth in the Creeds be taken as an admitted groundwork, which we must allow, not dispute,—to which we must come, not as judges, but disciples,—we shall float away into the same ocean of debate, where the faith of a large portion of the Protestant world has suffered shipwreck.

I should not have led you into so abstract a discussion, did it not involve practical considerations of the highest moment. If the stability of the Church of England depends, under God's blessing, upon her setting forth those fixed substantive principles of the ancient faith, which afford the only safeguard against superstition, as well as infidelity, of what importance is it that they should be acted upon, as well as admitted; that they should be enshrined, not only in the pages of our divines, but in the hearts of our people. Now here, unless I am mistaken, there will be found a great deficiency.

Partly perhaps from the manner of our teaching, but still more from the vast multitudes whom we are unable to teach, there exists among us an immense mass of ignorance, concerning those primary objects of the Christian faith, our respective relations towards which, as Bishop Butler expresses it, make up all positive Theology. Now, these unseen realities it is the especial office of the Church to bring before men, just as the truths of natural religion are irresistibly impressed on thoughtful minds by the intercourse of life. But without passing the bounds of my own experience, I can assert that an abundance of persons are very imperfectly taught, even on such leading points as the Church's doctrine concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The nature, attributes, and peculiar efficacy of these three Persons in the blessed and undivided Trinity,—especially the work and office of the Son of GOD,—the marvellous fact of His Incarnation, that crowning mystery, whereby GODHEAD and Manhood, whereby matter and spirit are indissolubly combined,—the perfect union of two natures in His one person,—above all, the truth of His human nature as conjoined to the divine, its present action on our behalf, the reality of our union with it, so that as certainly as they are one flesh with the first Adam, must all Christians be joined to the second; and then the work of the Holy Ghost in effecting this mysterious operation, and thereby perpetuating the reality of Christ's presence with the members of His Church,—on all these cardinal points, our people are not only without that scientific knowledge, which it were idle to desire, but too many are destitute even of such practical perception as may guard them in the hour of trial, or guide them in the season of prayer. Few of us can have visited dying beds, without seeing instances in which a vague uncertain trust in God's mercy, and a reckless confidence of escaping punishment, has been founded on little more than the use of Christ's name, by those who know nothing of His person and offices, and have never given His service a serious thought.

And even if the great doctrine of our Lord's sole sacrifice for sin may have been made familiar to men by polemical statements of it in the Roman and Socinian controversies,

yet this too needs to be accompanied and completed by other truths. Its influence with mankind at large depends on those personal relations on which it truly rests. These are wholly insecure, unless developed into that complex character which makes up the external reality of Christ our Lord. Yet how little shocked would be the generality of men, if some part of this momentous whole were assailed by any covert heresy, whereof the practical results were not at once apparent. What better fitted to correct this indifference, than the due use of the Creed of St. Athanasius, not only on those great Festivals when none, of course, neglect it, but likewise on all occasions when it is appointed by the Church? During the last autumn, three Sundays occurred when the coincidence of the Feasts of St. Bartholomew, St. Matthew, and St. Andrew, with the weekly memorial of the resurrection, gave peculiar opportunity of bringing this Creed before the more full assemblies of our people. Such an opportunity does not recur for six years, nor any occasion of the kind during the current one, but a different means of effecting the same object, is afforded by the requirement of the Church respecting public catechising.

An attention to this command would supply the very means which are needed for bringing the outward realities of the Christian faith before the minds of men. The explicitness required in catechising, the repeated handling of the simplest matters, the viewing Gospel truths on various sides,—are exactly what is required. The unseen objects which we desire to exhibit, would then be set forth in divers relations; the young would learn to think and speak of them as present living existencies; faith would take place of that deep-rooted scepticism, with which invisible powers are at present regarded—a scepticism of which we have examples in the contempt for baptism and public worship—and men of elder age would often be moved by the unquestioning reality of children. We may be assured that to the great majority of our congregations, nothing would be more attractive than catechising, if conducted and preceded by due preparation. It should of course be built, as our duty requires, on the Church Catechism. The whole of this we are under plain obligations

to teach to the young, as being that part of the Prayer Book which is particularly intended for them. But we must not stop short with the mere literal repetition of its words. The complex system which it implies must be built up as a consistent whole in the minds of children. They should be familiar with its parts and relations. It should form the groundwork for their future meditations. We should possess them with that body of conceptions respecting the unseen world, which by God's help may ripen in later years into the actions of faith, devotion, and love. Let me appeal in proof of the efficacy of such early culture to the experience of a minister who long laboured among our Australian convicts. In those of them, he says, whose early instruction had been the mere vague acquisition of texts of Scripture, according to the usage of many Sunday Schools, every trace of early impressions had been obliterated, while the callous mind scarce admitted the stimulus of a new emotion; but wherever there had been a diligent grounding in the catechetical system, the consciousness of the external realities of the unseen world seemed never to be lost, so that there remained a groundwork from which to start, in his endeavours to awaken and convert them. How great, then, the effect of that system, which even a careless life does not render wholly useless, if it takes "root in an honourable people, even in the portion of the Lord's inheritance."

Of course we must not suppose that this object can be efficiently attained without our own serious toil. To make public catechising effectual, there must be much private preparation. We must not be content to abandon the care of the younger part of our flock to others. No doubt there has been vast improvement of late years among our schoolmasters, and those who enjoy the invaluable opportunities now afforded in the Diocesan Training College, at York, may be expected by God's blessing, to repay the care and expense which is bestowed upon them; but we want something besides good schoolmasters, the clergy must see to it that the young are accustomed to love and fear God; they must consider this their own duty and first employment, for the want of which nothing else can compensate. In this respect there has been a great

deficiency both among the higher and lower ranks. The instruction of the young has been deemed a mere matter of intellectual progress, the germinating influence of love has been forgotten, the need of an affectionate, earnest, simple solicitude for the benefit of those whom in the momentous season of childhood the Providence of God has committed to our care. This want cannot be supplied unless the clergyman co-operate with the schoolmaster, as having a common work, and desiring a common end. And were this feeling in men's hearts, public catechising would rise up of course, as being the natural means of extending to the whole parish the same benefit, which the parish Priest had found most fruitful with his younger brethren. It would be needless to command what his own experience would suggest. We need not point to the Rubric and the Canon, which render the neglect of catechising the violation of a law: the instinctive perception of those who had taught the system of the Gospel to the young, would lead them to extend this mode of enforcing it to their elders. Where public catechising, therefore, does not prevail, we may be sure that even the young have not been fully grounded in the objective realities of the Gospel. Here, then, is room my Reverend Brethren, for further efforts on our part in that great work which God has given to our hands. Every year I feel more strongly, as I am persuaded you must feel, how great is this work, and how feeble our power of performing it. But never was a year more fitted to impress it upon us than the past. Since we met last, it has pleased God to take to Himself two of our brethren, known to all of you by their public position, and to many of us by the more endearing bond of personal friendship. Though their public function connected them with the other Archdeaconries of the Diocese, yet as being both of them beneficed in this Riding, and one of them, the Archdeacon of Cleveland, long resident among us, we naturally owe them this brief tribute of respect. God grant that their successors may be enabled to temper superior talents by Christian meekness, and to unite the conscientious discharge of public duties with the winning amiableness of private life as remarkably as did our departed friends. May

they abound equally in good works, and be not less ready when the Master calls them to their last account. With such thoughts, my Reverend brethren, let us take leave of one another, and approach the responsibilities and labours of another year.

May God for Christ's sake forgive the omissions of our service, and prosper what we attempt.

